



AWSĀF AL-AŠRĀF

AWSĀF AL-AŠRĀF, a short mystical-ethical work in Persian by Naṣīr-al-dīn Ṭūsī, written late in life, ca. 670/1271-72. According to its introduction, it was composed after the [Aḳlāq-e nāṣerī](#) for Ṣāḥeb-e Dīvān Šams-al-dīn Moḥammad Jovaynī, statesman and brother of the historian ‘Alā’-al-dīn ‘Aṭā Malek. Its genuineness is questioned by those who feel it contrasts too strongly with Ṭūsī’s life and with his other writings. While a few would doubt its actual authenticity, many others only too easily assert (cf. A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, London, 1958, p. 262) that the author himself could not have been “sincere” when writing it. In the nature of the case, nothing conclusive is likely to emerge. One might observe that a measure of inconsistency or (perhaps better) development is a natural part of human existence; as the experience of many rational thinkers would suggest (Plato, Plotinus, Ġazālī, Avicenna, and St. Thomas Aquinas are but a few), there is no essential dichotomy as between pragmatic living and philosophy on the one hand and mystical intuition on the other. On internal evidence, the linguistic features of the work (especially the use of the Arabic component) have much in common with those of the [Aḳlāq-e nāṣerī](#). The same holds for a good part of the content and the treatment; cf. especially the latter work’s Discourse Three, Section Two, on love.

The treatise is not really original or concerned with the technicalities of mystical discipline and experience; rather does it seek to apply, in fairly standard fashion, the fruits of the mystical lifestyle to moral situations. It is divided into six *bābs* (chapters), each of which except the last (a very short



piece), is subdivided into six faṣls (sections), of varying length. Chapter one (on motion) comprises faith, constancy, intention, truthfulness, conversion, and sincerity. Chapter two (on removing hindrances from the spiritual path) includes repentance, abstinence, poverty, discipline, self-examination, and piety. Chapter three (on the mystical path and the search for perfection) has solitude, reflection, fear and sadness, hope, fortitude, and gratitude. Chapter four is on the states associated with the way-stages until perfection is attained and comprises will, yearning, love (maḥabbat), knowledge (maʿrefat), certainty, and repose. Chapter five (on the states befalling those who attain) includes reliance on God, acceptance, surrender to God, monotheistic affirmation (tawḥīd), union with God (etteḥād), and unity (waḥdat). Chapter six is on self-annihilation (fanā).

The work has been copied, lithographed, and printed many times, never critically. A Berlin (Kāvīānī) edition of 1306 Š./1927 was republished in Tehran 1345 Š./1966. Prepared by Ḥ. Sayyed Naṣrallāh Taqawī, it is a facsimile of the calligraphy of Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Sayfī ʿEmād-al-kottāb. It has a page-by-page Arabic equivalent by Rokn-al-dīn Moḥammad b. ʿAlī Jorjānī and a somewhat far-ranging introduction on philosophy and mysticism, in east and west, by Moḥammad Modarresī. There is no complete western-language translation, nor would one add much to the body of Islamic mystical lore already available.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Monzawī, *Nosḵahā* I, pp. 1057-59.

Mošār, *Fehrest* I, cols. 403-04.

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